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DAREDEVIL
THE MAN WITHOUT FEAR

FRANK MILLER
JOHN ROMITA JR.
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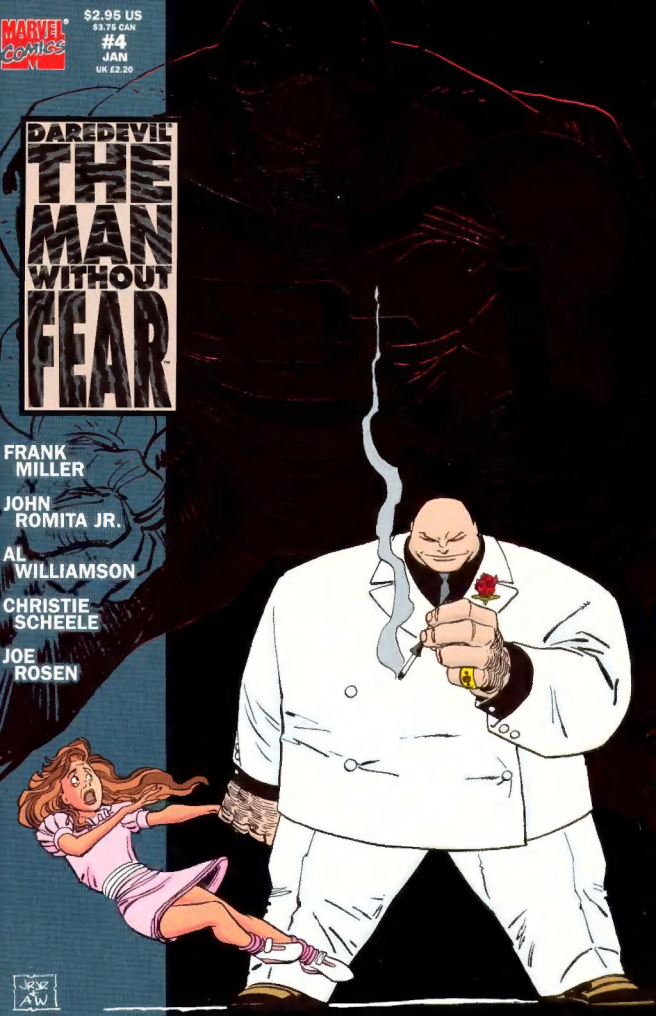

IT'S A WONDER HE ISN'T A VILLAIN.

HE'S GOT EVERY EXCUSE. BORN TO POVERTY. A BROKEN FAMILY. A CHILDHOOD SPENT IN A SQUALID SLUM. HOUNDED AND TAUNTED AND BEATEN BY SCHOOLYARD BULLIES. TO TOP IT ALL OFF HE GETS STRUCK IN THE EYES BY TOXIC WASTE AND BLINDED FOR LIFE.

DAREDEVIL

DAREDEVIL

BLINDED, BULLIED, IMPOVERISHED. SURROUNDED BY CALAMITY.

ROLE MODELS? HIS MOTHER. AN ENIGMA. LONG GONE BY THE TIME HE COULD WALK. HIS FATHER. A WELL-MEANING LOSER WHO PAID FOR HIS GREATEST MOMENT OF COURAGE WHEN A BULLET SPLATTERED HIS BRAINS ACROSS A GRIMY ALLEY WALL. HIS TEACHER. A GRUFF, FOUL-MOUTHED WARRIOR WHO SHOWED HIM THE BEAUTY IN HIS DARK WORLD, THEN DISMISSED HIM AS A WRETCHED FAILURE.

HIS LOVE LIFE? NOTHING SHORT OF DISASTROUS.

FUMP

HE'S GOT ALL THE MAKINGS OF A VILLAIN. HE'S A NATURAL BORN RASCAL, A MISCHIEF-MAKER, A SCRAPPER. HE'S A LIAR, WHO WEARS A MASK TO BETRAY THE SOLEMN OATH HE MADE TO HIS FATHER A THOUSAND TIMES. HE'S A DANGEROUS ADEPT, GIFTED WITH A NEARLY SUPERHUMAN TALENT FOR VIOLENCE. HE'S A LONER, A SINNER, A LAWYER WHO BREAKS THE LAW.

AND THEN THERE'S THAT WICKED TEMPER OF HIS.

HE'S GOT EVERY EXCUSE IN THE WORLD. AND WITHIN HIM ARE THE MAKINGS.

BUT MATT MURDOCK IS NO VILLAIN, AND NO VICTIM. THERE'S SOMETHING STRONG INSIDE HIM, PASSED FROM UNKNOWN MOTHER AND DOOMED FATHER TO SON. SOMETHING TESTED BY TRAGEDY. TEMPERED BY CONSCIENCE. HONED BY DISCIPLINE. SOMETHING THAT HOLDS BACK THE BLOODTHIRSTY BEAST WITHIN AND FORCES IT TO SERVE THE CAUSE OF JUSTICE.

MOST OF THE TIME, ANYWAY.

OF COURSE HIS QUEST IS A TORTURED ONE, FRAUGHT WITH FAILURE AND GUILT AND PAIN. IT HAS TO BE THAT WAY. NOTHING EVER COMES EASY FOR MATT MURDOCK. BUT EVERY ORDEAL IS ANOTHER STEP IN HIS CROOKED PATH FROM NAUGHTY LITTLE STREET KID TO IMPROBABLE CHAMPION.

A TORTURED QUEST. ONE THAT LEAVES HIM FAR FROM PERFECT.

HE MAY NEVER JOIN THE HOLY ORDER HIS TEACHER HINTED AT.

BUT HE WILL DO THE BEST HE CAN, THIS HERO.

HE'LL FIGHT THE BULLIES TILL THE DAY HE DIES.

FRANK MILLER
LOS ANGELES 1993

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STAN LEE PRESENTS...

DAREDEVIL THE MAN WITHOUT FEAR

In just a few short weeks DAREDEVIL will be thirty. To celebrate this event we have given him a double-sized anniversary issue, a poster, and, of course, the final issue of THE MAN WITHOUT FEAR. You still have to read this very issue. Wait on pins and needles. Then be back for more. A lot more.

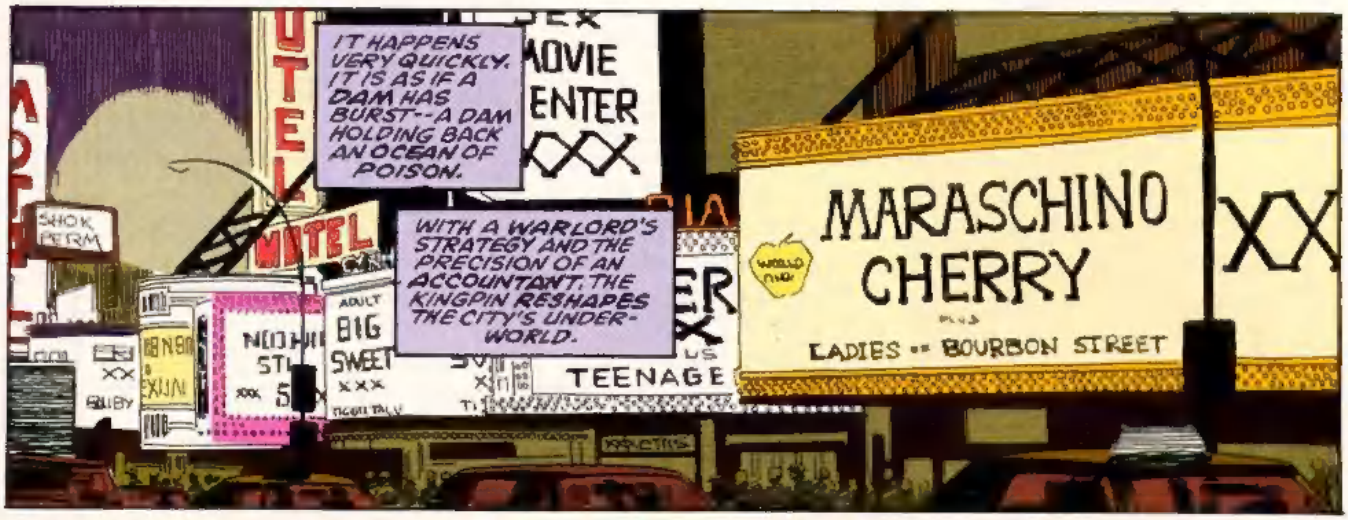
It's going to be the anniversary that was worth a thirty year wait.

Ralph & Pat

WHAT HAS GONE ON BEFORE:

College student Matt Murdock continues his romantic involvement with the mysterious Elektra. He works out with her, and makes love to her–despite his mentor Stick's admonition that she is to be avoided. Then, following the death of her diplomat father, Elektra leaves, almost breaking Matt's heart.

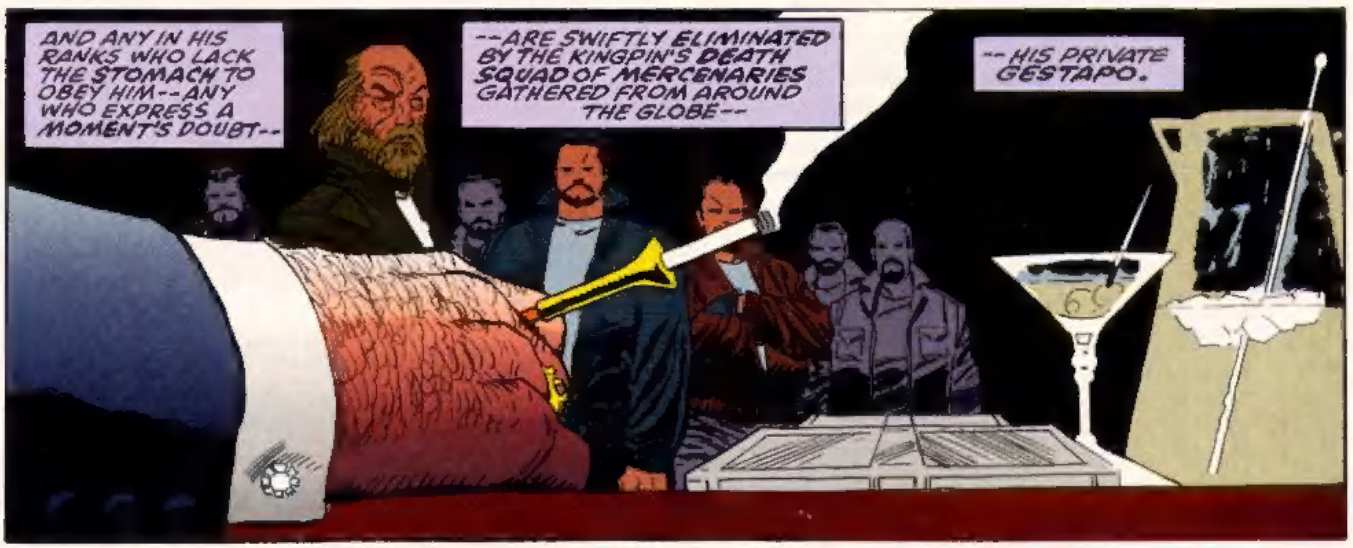
Meanwhile, in Manhattan, a new figure in organized crime emerges: the Kingpin. His presence will soon have a profound effect on the turbulent life of one Matthew Murdock.

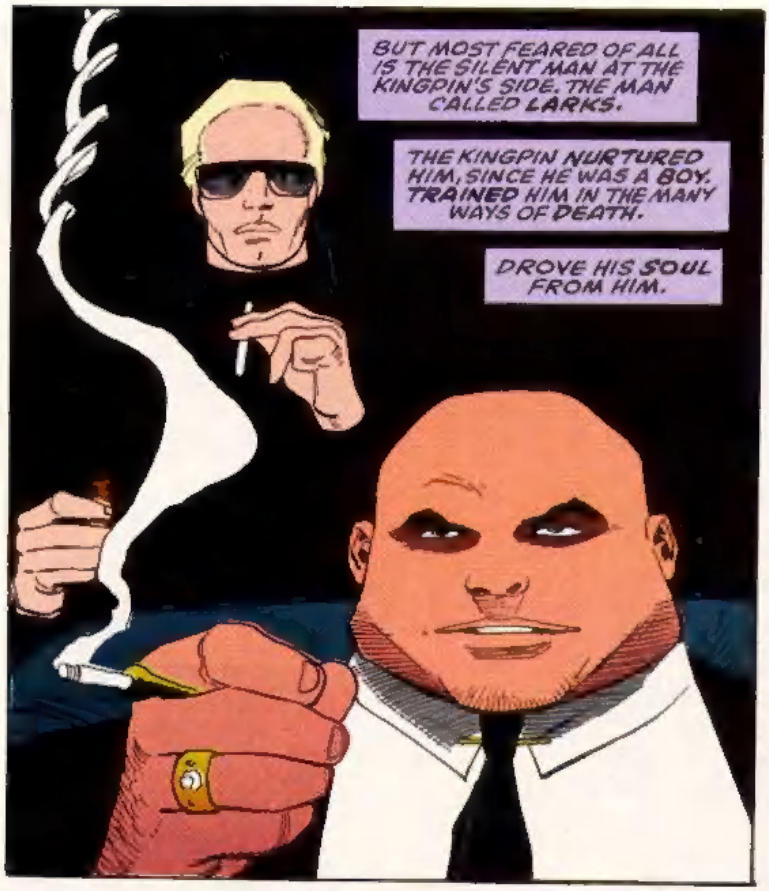

IT HAPPENS VERY QUICKLY. IT IS AS IF A DAM HAS BURST--A DAM HOLDING BACK AN OCEAN OF POISON.
WITH A WARLORD'S STRATEGY AND THE PRECISION OF AN ACCOUNTANT, THE KINGPIN RESHAPES THE CITY'S UNDERWORLD.
MARASCHINO CHERRY
LADIES -- BOURBON STREET
TEENAGE

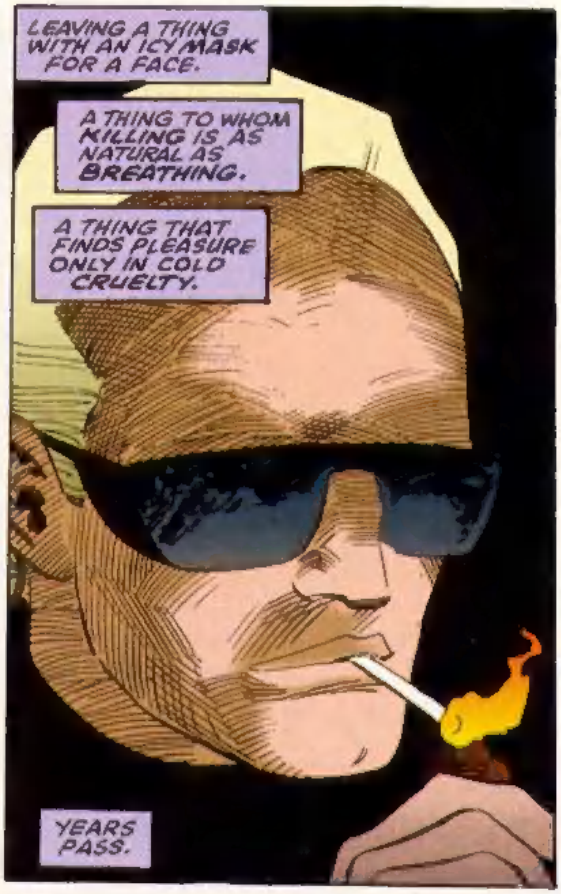
AND THE PROFITS ROLL IN. BY THE BILLIONS.
PROFITS--FROM THE KIDNAPPING AND OUTRIGHT SALE OF THE CITY'S CHILDREN--
--CONDEMNING INNOCENTS TO FATES THAT ARE UNSPEAKABLE.

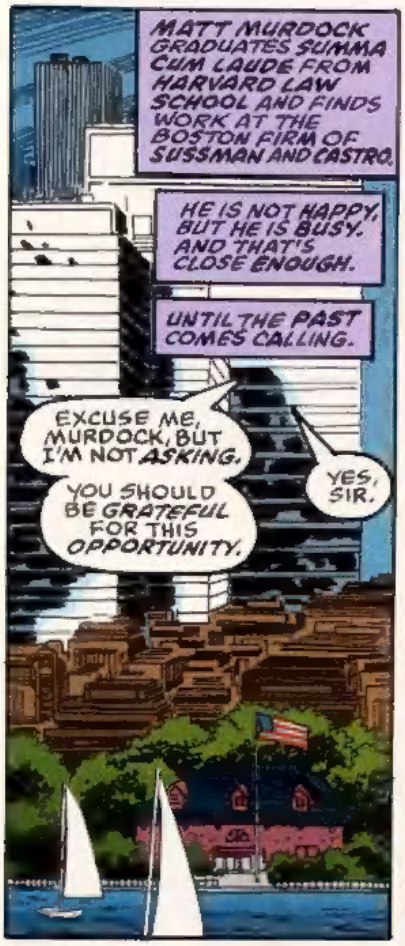
PROFITS--FROM STATE OF THE ART DRUGS THAT TURN WORKING CITIZENS INTO HOLLOW HELPLESS WRETCHES WHO WILL DO ANYTHING TO SATISFY A CRAVING THAT WILL NEVER END...

PROFITS--FROM COUNTLESS LIVES RUINED.
FROM COUNTLESS LIVES LOST.


AND ANY IN HIS RANKS WHO LACK THE STOMACH TO OBEY HIM--ANY WHO EXPRESS A MOMENT'S DOUBT--
--ARE SWIFTLY ELIMINATED BY THE KINGPIN'S DEATH SQUAD OF MERCENARIES GATHERED FROM AROUND THE GLOBE--
--HIS PRIVATE GESTAPO.

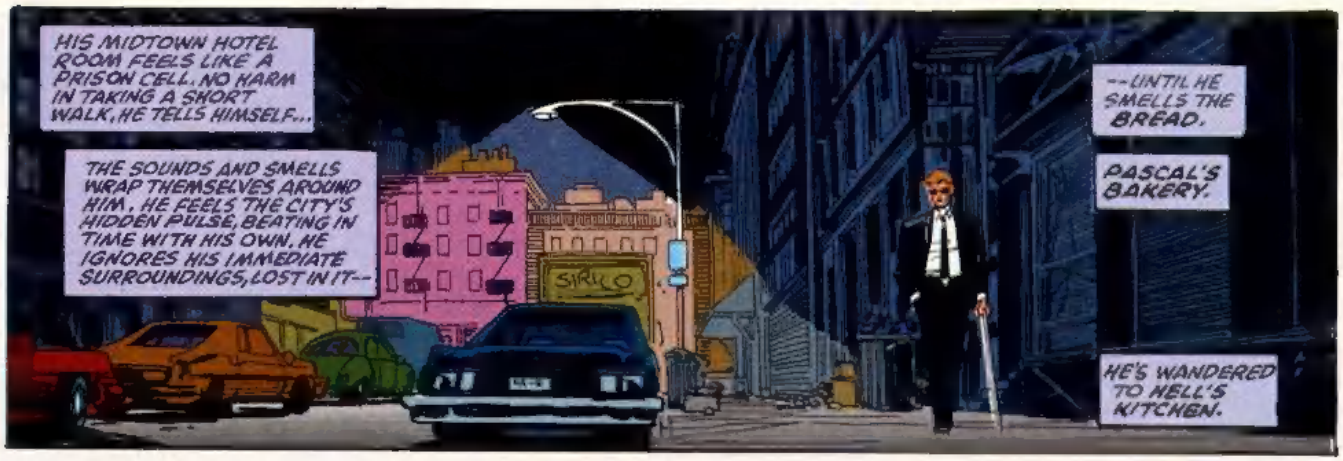

BUT MOST FEARED OF ALL IS THE SILENT MAN AT THE KINGPIN'S SIDE. THE MAN CALLED LARKS.
THE KINGPIN NURTURED HIM, SINCE HE WAS A BOY. TRAINED HIM IN THE MANY WAYS OF DEATH.
DROVE HIS SOUL FROM HIM.


LEAVING A THING WITH AN ICY MASK FOR A FACE.
A THING TO WHOM KILLING IS AS NATURAL AS BREATHING.
A THING THAT FINDS PLEASURE ONLY IN COLD CRUELTY.
YEARS PASS.


MATT MURDOCK GRADUATES SUMMA CUM LAUDE FROM HARVARD LAW SCHOOL AND FINDS WORK AT THE BOSTON FIRM OF SUSSMAN AND CASTRO.
HE IS NOT HAPPY, BUT HE IS BUSY. AND THAT'S CLOSE ENOUGH.
UNTIL THE PAST COMES CALLING.
EXCUSE ME, MURDOCK, BUT I'M NOT ASKING.
YES, SIR.
YOU SHOULD BE GRATEFUL FOR THIS OPPORTUNITY.

YOU'VE DONE GOOD WORK FOR US, MATT. KEEP IT UP AND YOU'RE ON YOUR WAY TO BECOMING THE YOUNGEST JUNIOR PARTNER WE'VE EVER HAD.
YES, SIR.
NOW GET YOUR BRIEF ON THAT PLANE TO NEW YORK AND NO MORE ARGUMENTS!

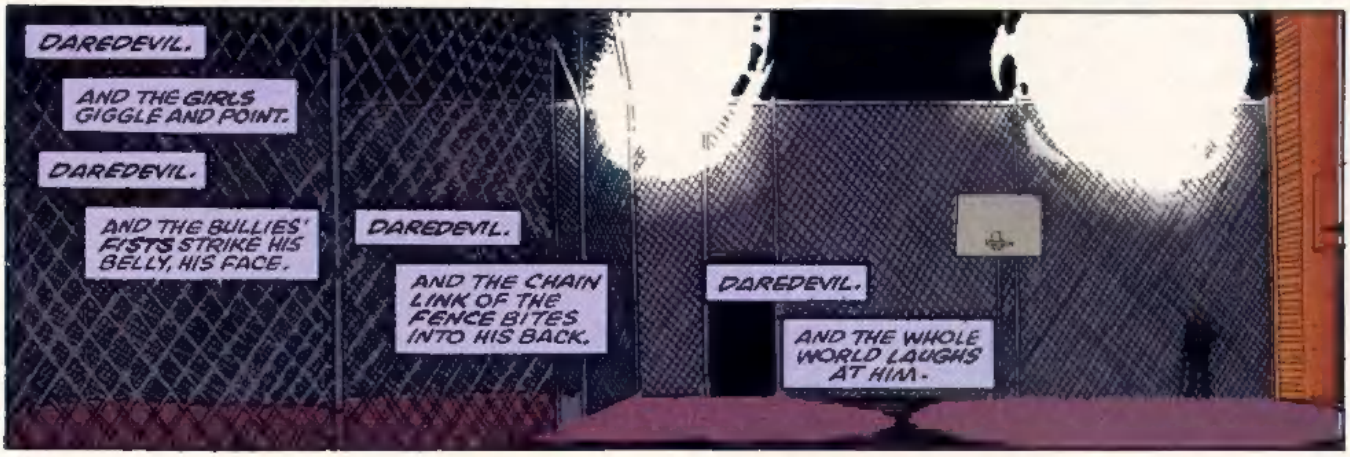
NEW YORK. IT STILL SOUNDS THE SAME. IT STILL FEELS THE SAME.
AND ALL THE MEMORIES SURGE UP, LAUGHING AT HIM LIKE SCHOOLYARD BULLIES.
YOU CAN'T ESCAPE ME, THE CITY ROARS.
YOU CAN'T ESCAPE YOURSELF.
AND SO MATT COMES BACK.


HIS MIDTOWN HOTEL ROOM FEELS LIKE A PRISON CELL. NO HARM IN TAKING A SHORT WALK, HE TELLS HIMSELF...
THE SOUNDS AND SMELLS WRAP THEMSELVES AROUND HIM. HE FEELS THE CITY'S HIDDEN PULSE, BEATING IN TIME WITH HIS OWN. HE IGNORES HIS IMMEDIATE SURROUNDINGS, LOST IN IT--
--UNTIL HE SMELLS THE BREAD.
PASCAL'S BAKERY.
HE'S WANDERED TO HELL'S KITCHEN.
SIRILLO

AND THE YEARS MELT AWAY.
AND HE CAN HEAR THE RATTLE OF HIS SKATE-BOARD.
THE ANGRY SHOUTS OF OFFICER LIEBOWITZ.

THE SMACK OF DAD'S RIGHT HOOK AND THE RISING CHEER OF THE CROWD.

AND THAT SOUND THAT MADE HIS STOMACH GO COLD.
THE NASTY ELECTRIC BUZZER THAT MEANS RECESS.
RECESS. AND THE NICKNAME.

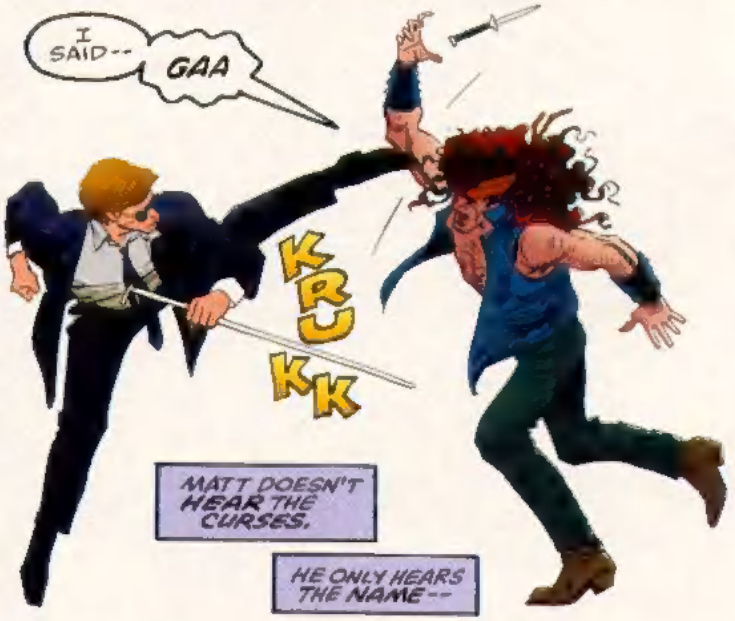

DAREDEVIL.
AND THE GIRLS GIGGLE AND POINT.
DAREDEVIL.
AND THE BULLIES' FISTS STRIKE HIS BELLY, HIS FACE.
DAREDEVIL.
AND THE CHAIN LINK OF THE FENCE BITES INTO HIS BACK.
DAREDEVIL.
AND THE WHOLE WORLD LAUGHS AT HIM.

DAREDEVIL.
DAREDEVIL.
DAREDEVIL.

AND NOW A NEW VOICE, CREAMY WITH CONFIDENCE.
BLIND MAN--I'M TALKING TO YOU.

WITH A BULLY'S CONFIDENCE.
AND BULLIES NEVER STRIKE ALONE.
LEAVE ME ALONE. I DON'T WANT ANY TROUBLE.
YOU SHOULD'VE THOUGHT ABOUT THAT BEFORE YOU PUT ON THAT THREE HUNDRED DOLLAR SUIT AND WENT CRUISING HELL'S KITCHEN.
IT'S ONE HELL OF A NICE SUIT.
I GET THE SHOES.

GIVE US A SHOW, BLIND MAN.
STRIP.
SNIKK


I SAID--
GAA
KRUKK
MATT DOESN'T HEAR THE CURSES.
HE ONLY HEARS THE NAME--

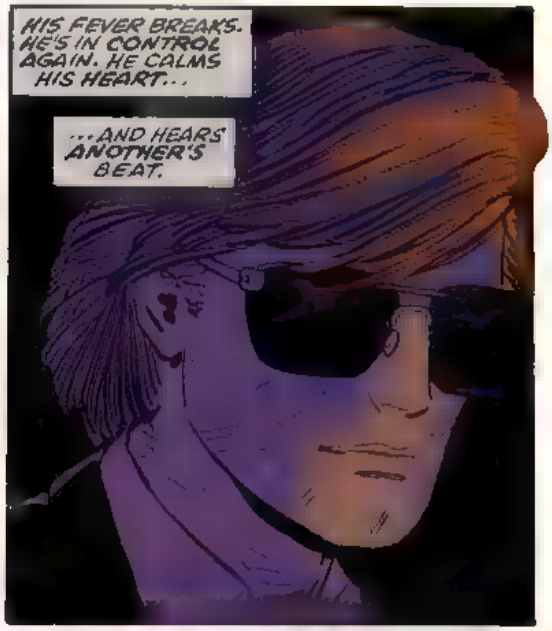
--DAREDEVIL.
DAREDEVIL.
DAREDEVIL.
SNAPP
KUDD
KAKK
KRAKK
KLUGG

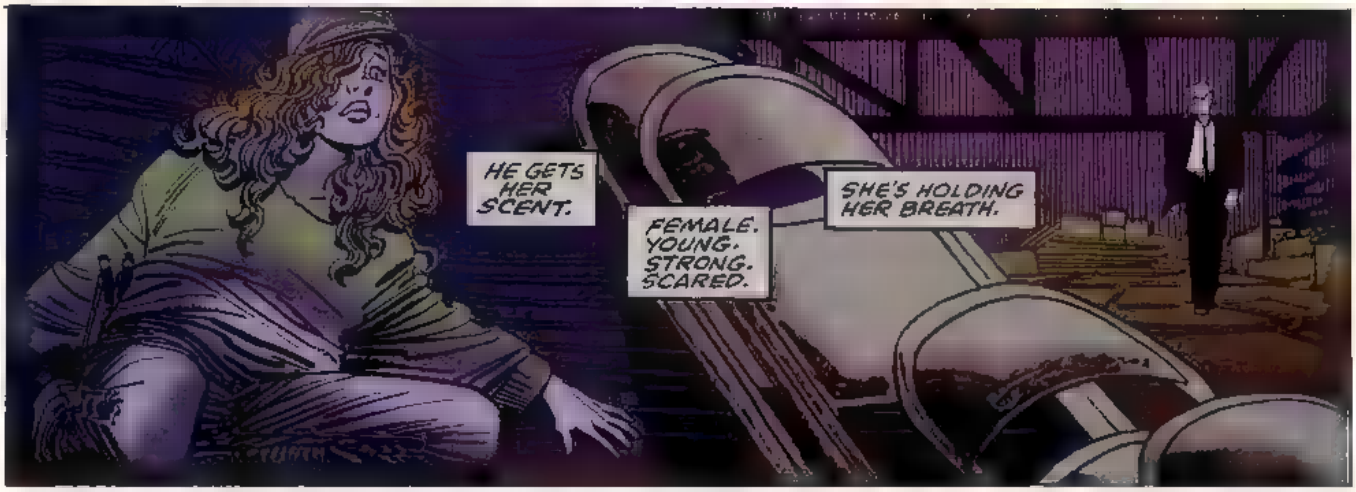
CHAK
CHOK
WHUK
SNAK
CHUK
YOU SHOULDN'T HAVE CALLED ME THAT.

NO--
--LEAVE ME ALONE--
BUT THE BULLIES WON'T STOP SAYING IT.
AND THE CHAIN LINK BITES HIS BACK.
AND THE GIRLS GIGGLE AND POINT.
YAA NO-- PLEASE--
CHUDD

KEFF
FINALLY, THE BUZZER SOUNDS AGAIN.
RECESS IS OVER AT LAST.
HE SHOULD FEEL RELIEVED. AVENGED.
BUT HE JUST FEELS LOST AND ALONE AND SICK.
HE GOES TO HIS FAVORITE PLACE.
THE GYM.
NOW BOARDED UP. ABANDONED.
KREEE
BUT IT STILL HOLDS ALL THE DUSTY SWEATY SMELLS.
HE CAN ALMOST HEAR A YOUNG BOY'S FISTS STRIKING A PUNCHING BAG, THE SOUND ECHOING LIKE MACHINE GUN FIRE...

BUT THAT'S ALL GONE NOW. DEAD AND BURIED. IN THE PAST.
MURDOCK VS RUGGER
BURIED WITH DAD.
BURIED WITH MATT'S SKATE-BOARD AND SKI MASK AND ALL HIS MISCHIEF.
RUIZ
BOYARDO

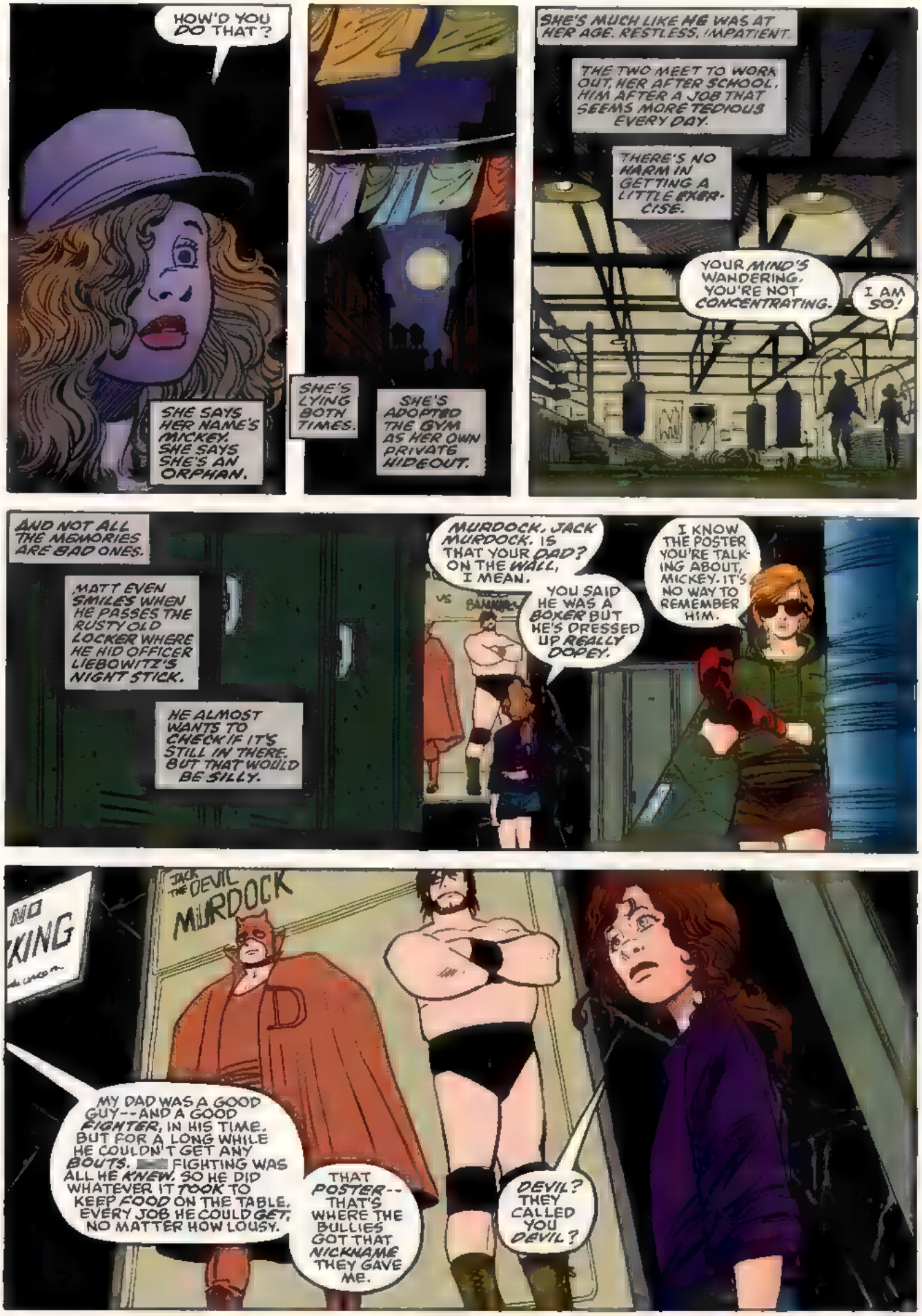

HIS FEVER BREAKS. HE'S IN CONTROL AGAIN. HE CALMS HIS HEART...
...AND HEARS ANOTHER'S BEAT.


HE GETS HER SCENT.
FEMALE. YOUNG. STRONG. SCARED.
SHE'S HOLDING HER BREATH.

NOW--SHE'S MOVING--
--RUBBER GIVES OUT A GROAN--

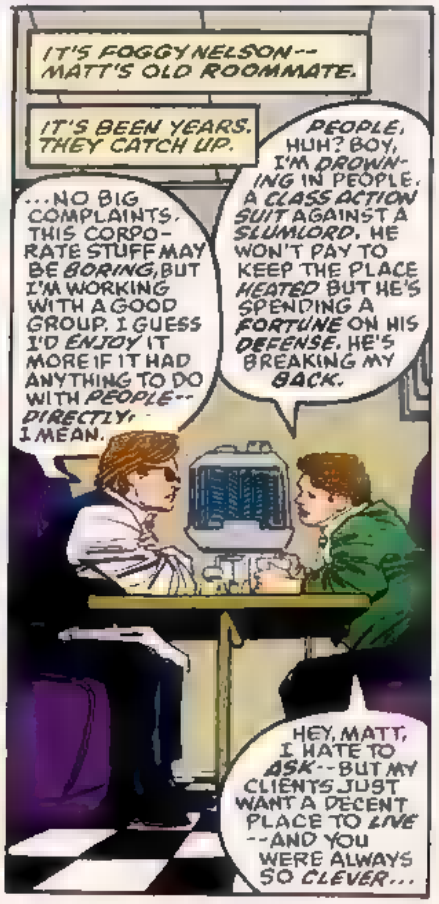
--THEN SIGHS, IN RELIEF.

I MEAN YOU NO HARM, YOUNG LADY.
THPP

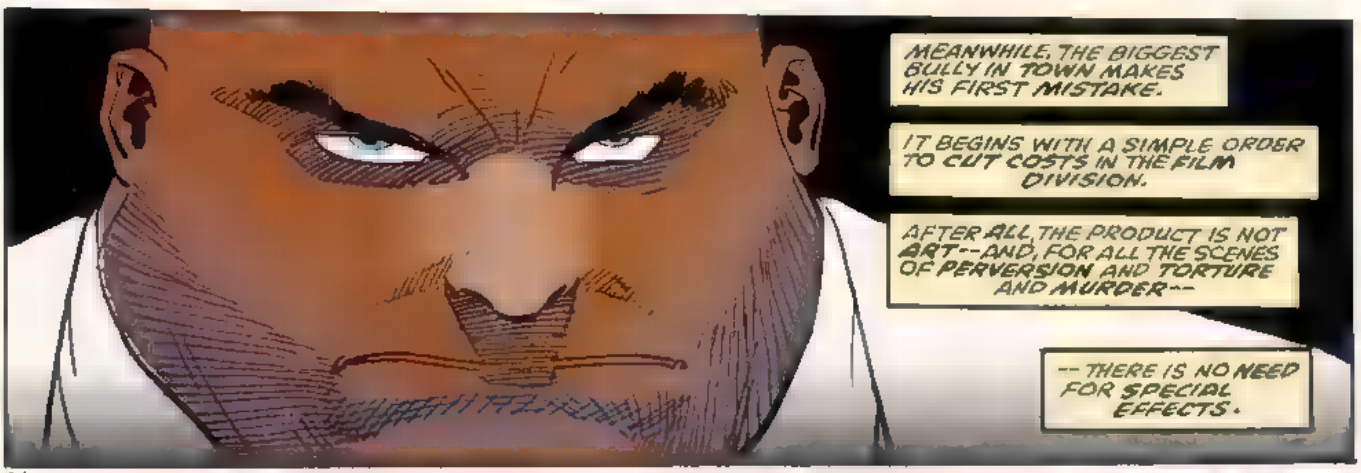

HOW'D YOU DO THAT?
SHE SAYS HER NAME'S MICKEY. SHE SAYS SHE'S AN ORPHAN.
SHE'S LYING BOTH TIMES.
SHE'S ADOPTED THE GYM AS HER OWN PRIVATE HIDEOUT.
SHE'S MUCH LIKE HE WAS AT HER AGE. RESTLESS, IMPATIENT.
THE TWO MEET TO WORK OUT, HER AFTER SCHOOL, HIM AFTER A JOB THAT SEEMS MORE TEDIOUS EVERY DAY.
THERE'S NO HARM IN GETTING A LITTLE EXERCISE.
YOUR MIND'S WANDERING, YOU'RE NOT CONCENTRATING.
I AM SO!
AND NOT ALL THE MEMORIES ARE BAD ONES.
MATT EVEN SMILES WHEN HE PASSES THE RUSTY OLD LOCKER WHERE HE HID OFFICER LIEBOWITZ'S NIGHT STICK.
HE ALMOST WANTS TO CHECK IF IT'S STILL IN THERE. BUT THAT WOULD BE SILLY.
MURDOCK, JACK MURDOCK. IS THAT YOUR DAD? ON THE WALL, I MEAN.
YOU SAID HE WAS A BOXER BUT HE'S DRESSED UP REALLY DOPEY.
I KNOW THE POSTER YOU'RE TALKING ABOUT, MICKEY. IT'S NO WAY TO REMEMBER HIM.
JACK THE DEVIL MURDOCK
MY DAD WAS A GOOD GUY--AND A GOOD FIGHTER, IN HIS TIME. BUT FOR A LONG WHILE HE COULDN'T GET ANY BOUTS. [redacted] FIGHTING WAS ALL HE KNEW. SO HE DID WHATEVER IT TOOK TO KEEP FOOD ON THE TABLE. EVERY JOB HE COULD GET, NO MATTER HOW LOUSY.
THAT POSTER--THAT'S WHERE THE BULLIES GOT THAT NICKNAME THEY GAVE ME.
DEVIL? THEY CALLED YOU DEVIL?

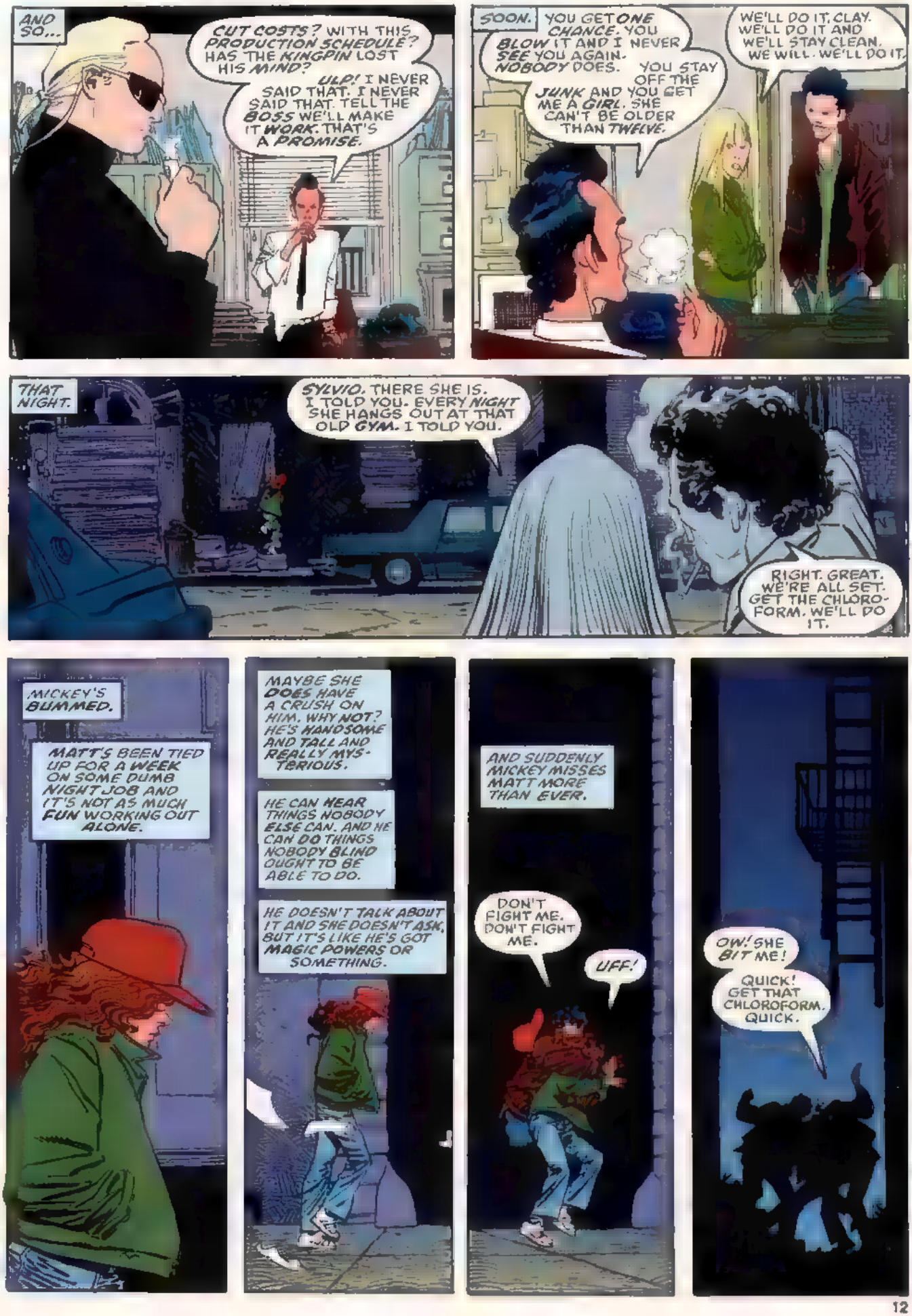
NO, IT WAS DAREDEVIL.
THEY CALLED ME DAREDEVIL.
FAPP

WEEKS SAIL BY, PLEASANTLY ENOUGH.
THEN, ONE DAY, AS MATT PONDERS LUNCH...
YOU WANNA PASTRAMI REUBEN ON WHITE? THAT'S A DAMN CRIME!
AND A SIDE OF MAYONNAISE, PLEASE.
MAYO ONNA REUBEN? THAT MAKES IT A FELONY!
THERE'S NO MISTAKING THE VOICE-- OR THE TASTES.

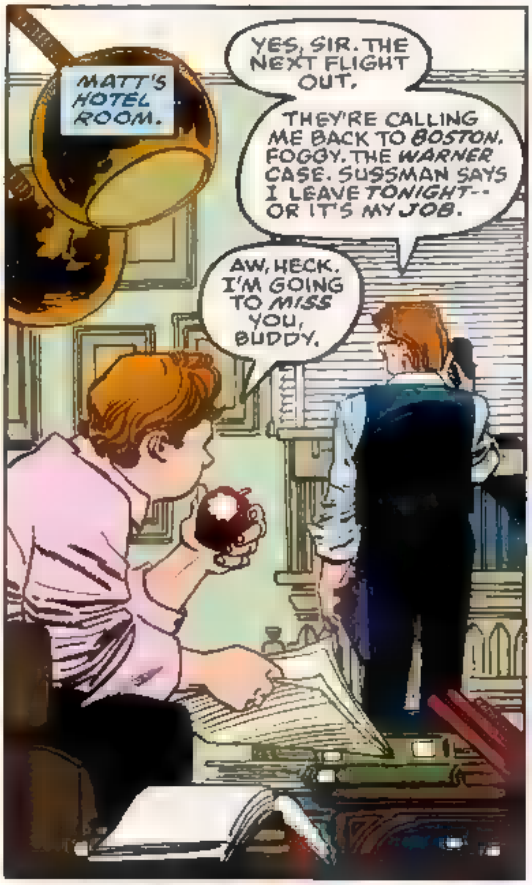

IT'S FOGGY NELSON-- MATT'S OLD ROOMMATE.
IT'S BEEN YEARS. THEY CATCH UP.
PEOPLE, HUH? BOY, I'M DROWNING IN PEOPLE. A CLASS ACTION SUIT AGAINST A SLUMLORD. HE WON'T PAY TO KEEP THE PLACE HEATED BUT HE'S SPENDING A FORTUNE ON HIS DEFENSE. HE'S BREAKING MY BACK.
...NO BIG COMPLAINTS. THIS CORPORATE STUFF MAY BE BORING, BUT I'M WORKING WITH A GOOD GROUP. I GUESS I'D ENJOY IT MORE IF IT HAD ANYTHING TO DO WITH PEOPLE-- DIRECTLY, I MEAN.
HEY, MATT, I HATE TO ASK-- BUT MY CLIENTS JUST WANT A DECENT PLACE TO LIVE --AND YOU WERE ALWAYS SO CLEVER...

MATT LEAPS AT THE CHANCE TO HELP. NIGHT AFTER NIGHT, HE RESEARCHES AND CONJECTURES AND POSTULATES--
I THINK I MIGHT HAVE SOMETHING HERE, FOGGY. THE STOELTING VS. WEST DECISION, IT'S A STRETCH, BUT AN ARGUMENT COULD BE MADE... FOGGY?
Z
--AND MATT REMEMBERS WHY HE WANTED TO BECOME AN ATTORNEY.
TO FIGHT FOR JUSTICE.
TO FIGHT THE BULLIES.


MEANWHILE, THE BIGGEST BULLY IN TOWN MAKES HIS FIRST MISTAKE.
IT BEGINS WITH A SIMPLE ORDER TO CUT COSTS IN THE FILM DIVISION.
AFTER ALL, THE PRODUCT IS NOT ART--AND, FOR ALL THE SCENES OF PERVERSION AND TORTURE AND MURDER--
--THERE IS NO NEED FOR SPECIAL EFFECTS.

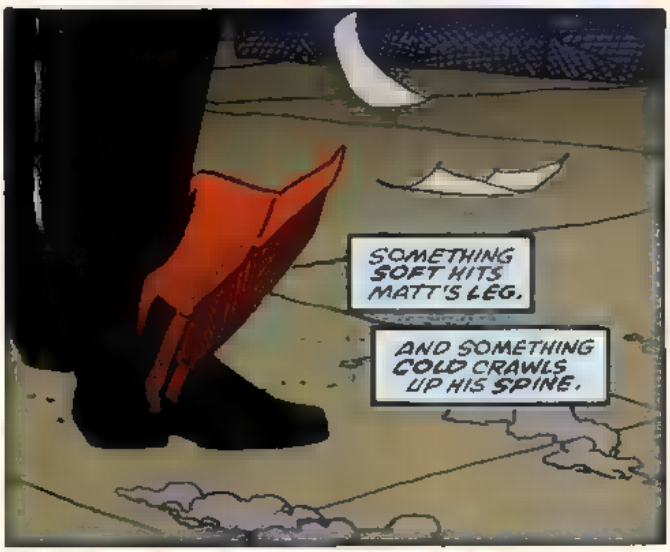

AND SO...
CUT COSTS? WITH THIS PRODUCTION SCHEDULE? HAS THE KINGPIN LOST HIS MIND?
ULP! I NEVER SAID THAT. I NEVER SAID THAT. TELL THE BOSS WE'LL MAKE IT WORK. THAT'S A PROMISE.
SOON.
YOU GET ONE CHANCE. YOU BLOW IT AND I NEVER SEE YOU AGAIN. NOBODY DOES. YOU STAY OFF THE JUNK AND YOU GET ME A GIRL. SHE CAN'T BE OLDER THAN TWELVE.
WE'LL DO IT, CLAY. WE'LL DO IT AND WE'LL STAY CLEAN. WE WILL. WE'LL DO IT.
THAT NIGHT.
SYLVIO. THERE SHE IS. I TOLD YOU. EVERY NIGHT SHE HANGS OUT AT THAT OLD GYM. I TOLD YOU.
RIGHT. GREAT. WE'RE ALL SET. GET THE CHLOROFORM. WE'LL DO IT.
MICKEY'S BUMMED.
MATT'S BEEN TIED UP FOR A WEEK ON SOME DUMB NIGHT JOB AND IT'S NOT AS MUCH FUN WORKING OUT ALONE.
MAYBE SHE DOES HAVE A CRUSH ON HIM. WHY NOT? HE'S HANDSOME AND TALL AND REALLY MYSTERIOUS.
HE CAN HEAR THINGS NOBODY ELSE CAN. AND HE CAN DO THINGS NOBODY BLIND OUGHT TO BE ABLE TO DO.
HE DOESN'T TALK ABOUT IT AND SHE DOESN'T ASK, BUT IT'S LIKE HE'S GOT MAGIC POWERS OR SOMETHING.
AND SUDDENLY MICKEY MISSES MATT MORE THAN EVER.
DON'T FIGHT ME. DON'T FIGHT ME.
UFF!
OW! SHE BIT ME!
QUICK! GET THAT CHLOROFORM. QUICK.

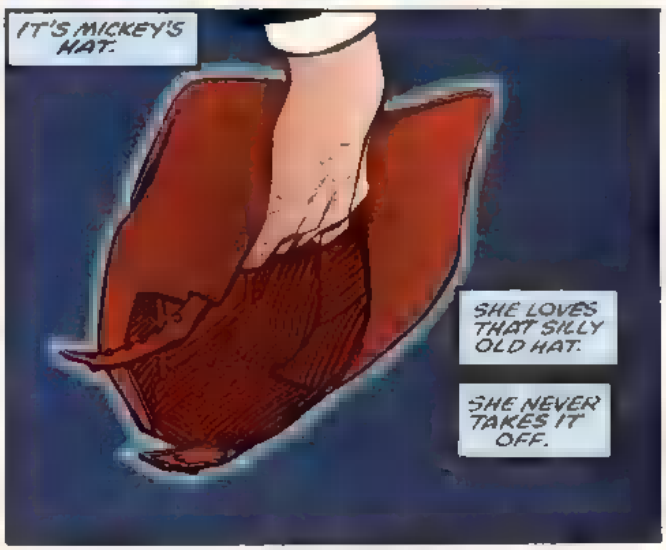
WOW. THAT STUFF REALLY WORKS!

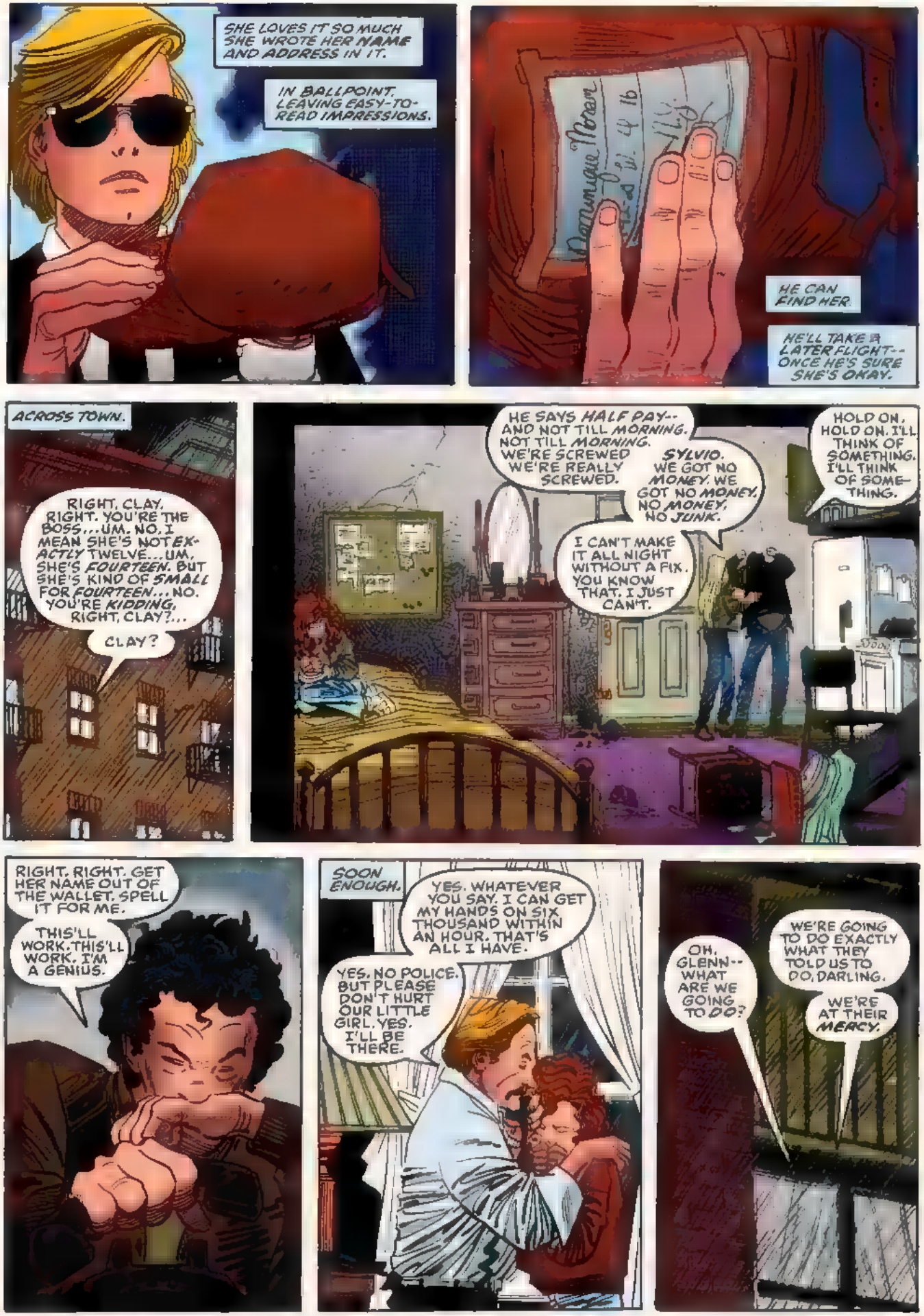

MATT'S HOTEL ROOM.
YES, SIR. THE NEXT FLIGHT OUT.
THEY'RE CALLING ME BACK TO BOSTON, FOGGY. THE WARNER CASE. SUSSMAN SAYS I LEAVE TONIGHT-- OR IT'S MY JOB.
AW, HECK. I'M GOING TO MISS YOU, BUDDY.

ON THE WAY TO THE AIRPORT.
ONE STOP ON THE WAY, DRIVER. IN HELL'S KITCHEN. IT'S AN OLD GYMNASIUM OFF COLUMBUS.
THERE'S SOMEBODY I HAVE TO SAY GOOD-BYE TO.
555

CAPUZZOS
HE SCANS THE GYM FOR SEVERAL MINUTES LONGER THAN HE NEEDS.
MICKEY'S NOT THERE.
HE'D HATE TO LEAVE WITHOUT TELLING HER.


SOMETHING SOFT HITS MATT'S LEG.
AND SOMETHING COLD CRAWLS UP HIS SPINE.


IT'S MICKEY'S HAT.
SHE LOVES THAT SILLY OLD HAT.
SHE NEVER TAKES IT OFF.


SHE LOVES IT SO MUCH SHE WROTE HER NAME AND ADDRESS IN IT.
IN BALLPOINT, LEAVING EASY-TO-READ IMPRESSIONS.
HE CAN FIND HER.
HE'LL TAKE A LATER FLIGHT-- ONCE HE'S SURE SHE'S OKAY.
ACROSS TOWN.
RIGHT, CLAY. RIGHT. YOU'RE THE BOSS... UM. NO, I MEAN SHE'S NOT EXACTLY TWELVE... UM, SHE'S FOURTEEN. BUT SHE'S KIND OF SMALL FOR FOURTEEN... NO. YOU'RE KIDDING, RIGHT, CLAY?...
CLAY?
HE SAYS HALF PAY-- AND NOT TILL MORNING. NOT TILL MORNING. WE'RE SCREWED WE'RE REALLY SCREWED.
SYLVIO. WE GOT NO MONEY. WE GOT NO MONEY. NO MONEY. NO JUNK.
I CAN'T MAKE IT ALL NIGHT WITHOUT A FIX. YOU KNOW THAT. I JUST CAN'T.
HOLD ON. HOLD ON. I'LL THINK OF SOMETHING. I'LL THINK OF SOMETHING.
RIGHT. RIGHT. GET HER NAME OUT OF THE WALLET. SPELL IT FOR ME.
THIS'LL WORK. THIS'LL WORK. I'M A GENIUS.
SOON ENOUGH.
YES. WHATEVER YOU SAY. I CAN GET MY HANDS ON SIX THOUSAND WITHIN AN HOUR. THAT'S ALL I HAVE.
YES. NO POLICE. BUT PLEASE DON'T HURT OUR LITTLE GIRL. YES. I'LL BE THERE.
OH, GLENN-- WHAT ARE WE GOING TO DO?
WE'RE GOING TO DO EXACTLY WHAT THEY TOLD US TO DO, DARLING.
WE'RE AT THEIR MERCY.

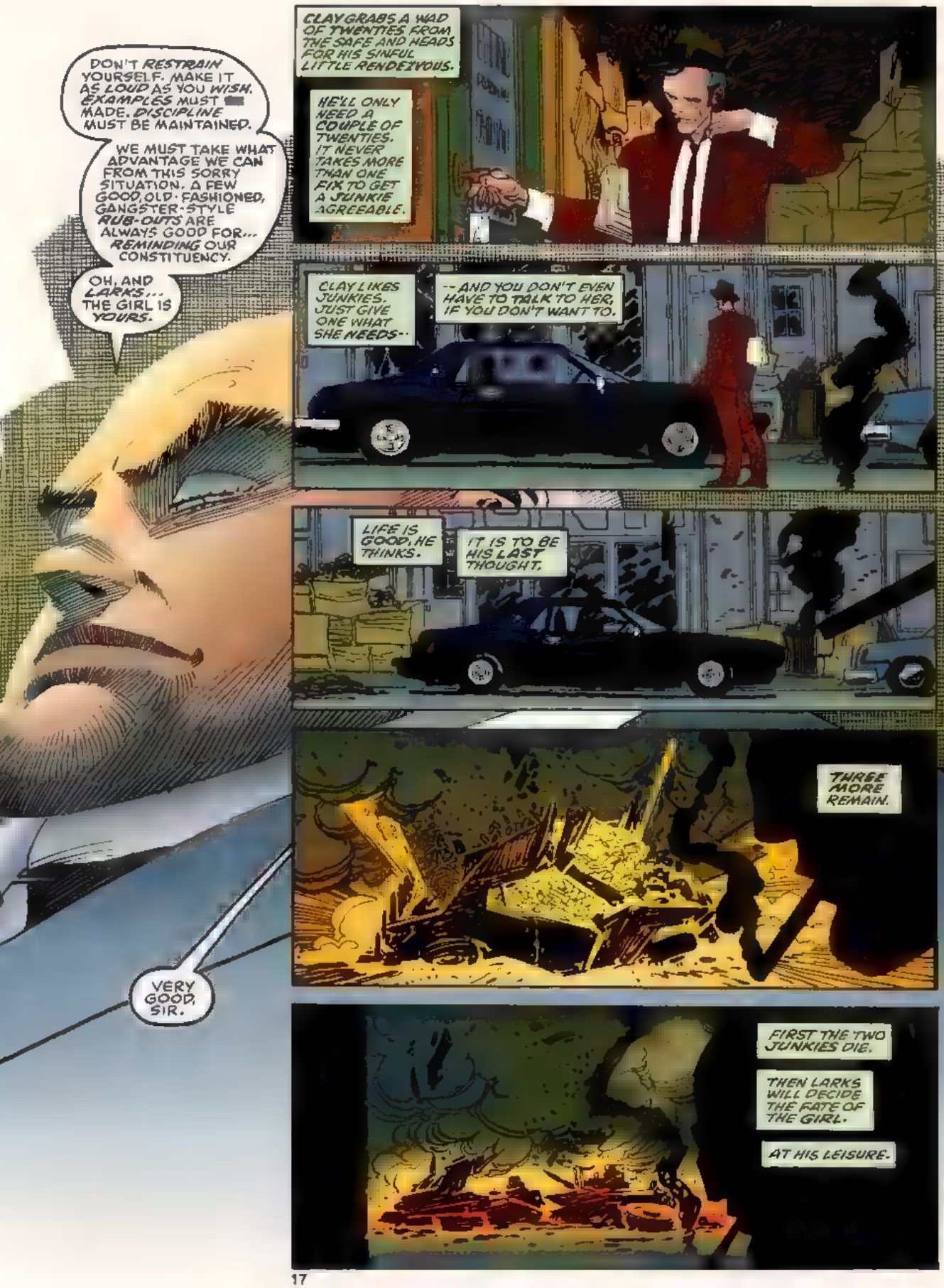
THERE'S NOBODY WHO CAN HELP US.

AT THE GYM.
KUKK

MEANWHILE. JUNKIE SELLS OUT JUNKIE.
phone
IT'S SYLVIO, CLAY. HE'S RUNNING A RANSOM SCAM ON THE KID'S PARENTS. THAT'S RIGHT. I ARGUED WITH HIM BUT HE WOULDN'T LISTEN. AND IF THE KINGPIN FINDS OUT ABOUT IT YOU COULD GET HURT. YOU KNOW I DON'T WANT YOU GETTING HURT.
UM. CAN I COME OVER?... OH, SURE, CLAY, I'LL MEET YOU ANYWHERE. WE'LL HAVE A GOOD TIME. UM. YOU'VE GOT MONEY, DON'T YOU?
CLAY'S BOSS TELLS HIS BOSS.

AND HIS BOSS TELLS HIS BOSS.
AND SOMEBODY'S BOSS TELLS THE KINGPIN.

UNACCEPTABLE.
CLAY'S INCOMPETENCE HAS CAUSED A MESS, LARKS. CLEAN IT UP.
YES, SIR.


DON'T RESTRAIN YOURSELF. MAKE IT AS LOUD AS YOU WISH. EXAMPLES MUST BE MADE. DISCIPLINE MUST BE MAINTAINED.
WE MUST TAKE WHAT ADVANTAGE WE CAN FROM THIS SORRY SITUATION. A FEW GOOD, OLD-FASHIONED, GANGSTER-STYLE RUB-OUTS ARE ALWAYS GOOD FOR... REMINDING OUR CONSTITUENCY.
OH, AND LARKS... THE GIRL IS YOURS.
VERY GOOD, SIR.
CLAY GRABS A WAD OF TWENTIES FROM THE SAFE AND HEADS FOR HIS SINFUL LITTLE RENDEZVOUS.
HE'LL ONLY NEED A COUPLE OF TWENTIES. IT NEVER TAKES MORE THAN ONE FIX TO GET A JUNKIE AGREEABLE.
CLAY LIKES JUNKIES. JUST GIVE ONE WHAT SHE NEEDS--
--AND YOU DON'T EVEN HAVE TO TALK TO HER, IF YOU DON'T WANT TO.
LIFE IS GOOD, HE THINKS.
IT IS TO BE HIS LAST THOUGHT.
THREE MORE REMAIN.
FIRST THE TWO JUNKIES DIE.
THEN LARKS WILL DECIDE THE FATE OF THE GIRL.
AT HIS LEISURE.

EAST EIGHTH STREET.
MICKEY'S DAD IS PANTING -- MORE FROM FEAR THAN FROM FATIGUE.
RING RING

HELLO?--YES. YES, I UNDERSTAND. WHATEVER YOU SAY, YES. I KNOW THE CORNER. YES. I'M ON MY WAY.

WHOEVER KIDNAPPED MICKEY IS BOUNCING THE POOR MAN ALL OVER TOWN, LOOKING TO SHAKE OFF ANY COPS WHO MIGHT BE TAILING HIM.
THE COPS WILL BE THE LEAST OF [redacted] WORRIES.

phone
phone
WEST SEVENTY-SECOND STREET.
RING RING

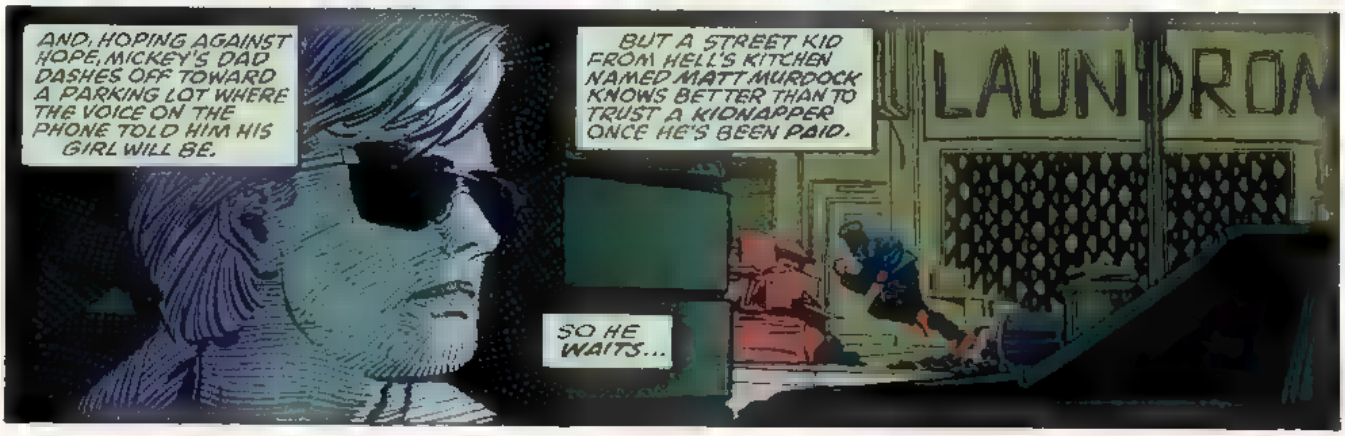
YES. YES. I'M ON MY WAY.

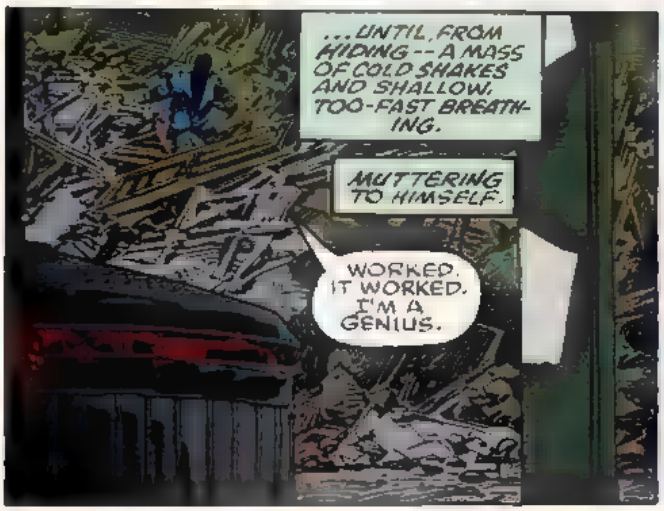
THEY RUN THE POOR MAN RAGGED.
WHIP
HOK

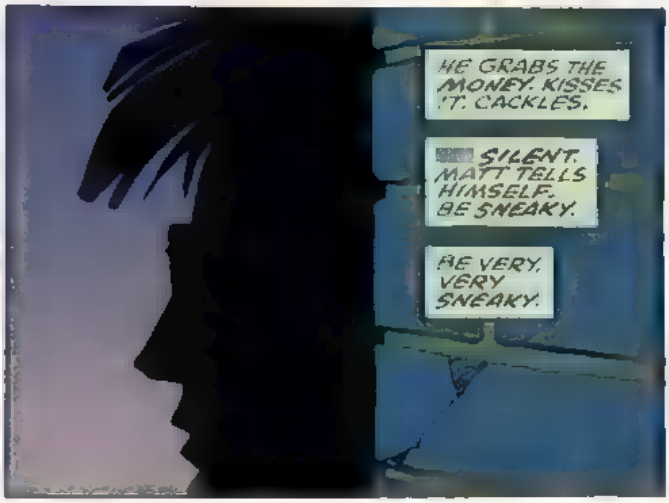
AND THEY TEST MATT'S PATIENCE FOR ALL IT'S WORTH.
phone
phone

FINALLY, IN THE SOUTH BRONX.
THE DROP-OFF.

EVERY DOLLAR HE HAS AND HE GIVES IT UP EAGERLY.


AND, HOPING AGAINST HOPE, MICKEY'S DAD DASHES OFF TOWARD A PARKING LOT WHERE THE VOICE ON THE PHONE TOLD HIM HIS GIRL WILL BE.
BUT A STREET KID FROM HELL'S KITCHEN NAMED MATT MURDOCK KNOWS BETTER THAN TO TRUST A KIDNAPPER ONCE HE'S BEEN PAID.
SO HE WAITS...


...UNTIL, FROM HIDING -- A MASS OF COLD SHAKES AND SHALLOW, TOO-FAST BREATHING.
MUTTERING TO HIMSELF.
WORKED. IT WORKED. I'M A GENIUS.

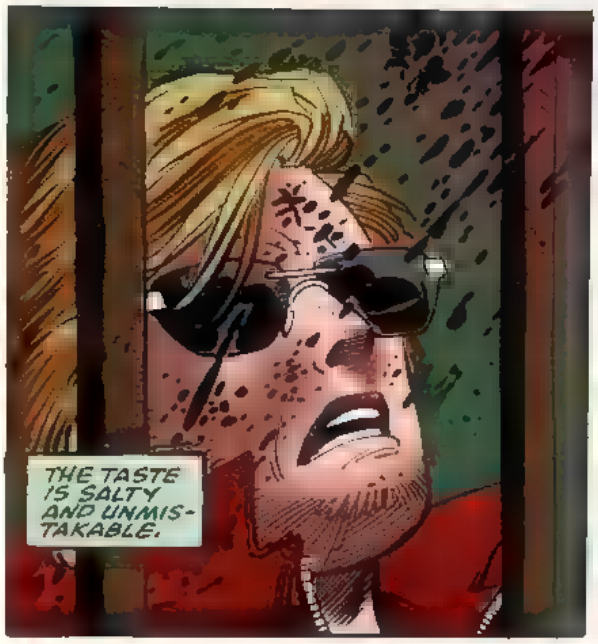

HE GRABS THE MONEY. KISSES IT. CACKLES.
SILENT. MATT TELLS HIMSELF. BE SNEAKY.
BE VERY, VERY SNEAKY.

A QUICK TRIP BACK INTO TOWN.
WAIT TILL SHE SEES THIS. DAMN. WAIT TILL SHE SEES THIS.
TV HE
HOTE

A GENIUS. I'M A GENIUS. WAIT TILL SHE SEES THIS.

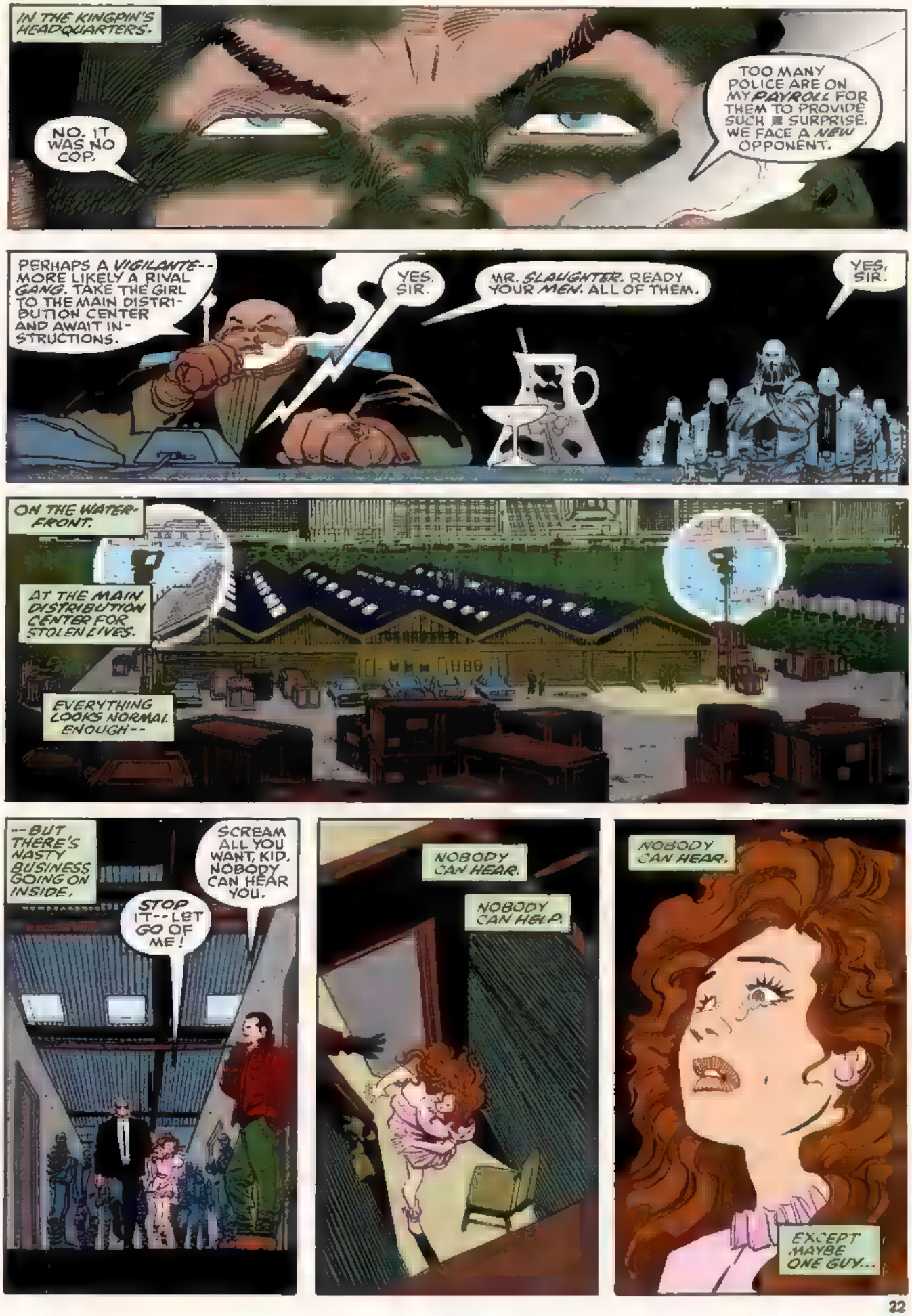
THE KINGPIN WILL NEVER KNOW. THERE'S NO WAY HE'LL EVER KNOW. I'M A GENIUS.

FUPP


THE TASTE IS SALTY AND UNMIS-TAKABLE.

MATT GAGS-- BREAKING HIS SILENCE--
--REVEALING HIMSELF.

FUPP
FUPP
FUPP
SPAK
SOON. OUTSIDE.
NOTHING, SIR, NOT A SOUND. NO SIGN OF HIM.
YES, SIR. CLAY AND THE JUNKIES ARE DEAD--AND I HAVE THE GIRL. BUT THIS NEW MAN--HE MAY BE A COP.


IN THE KINGPIN'S HEADQUARTERS.
NO. IT WAS NO COP.
TOO MANY POLICE ARE ON MY PAYROLL FOR THEM TO PROVIDE SUCH A SURPRISE. WE FACE A NEW OPPONENT.
PERHAPS A VIGILANTE--MORE LIKELY A RIVAL GANG. TAKE THE GIRL TO THE MAIN DISTRIBUTION CENTER AND AWAIT INSTRUCTIONS.
YES, SIR.
MR. SLAUGHTER. READY YOUR MEN. ALL OF THEM.
YES, SIR.
ON THE WATERFRONT.
AT THE MAIN DISTRIBUTION CENTER FOR STOLEN LIVES.
EVERYTHING LOOKS NORMAL ENOUGH--
--BUT THERE'S NASTY BUSINESS GOING ON INSIDE.
STOP IT--LET GO OF ME!
SCREAM ALL YOU WANT, KID, NOBODY CAN HEAR YOU.
NOBODY CAN HEAR.
NOBODY CAN HELP.
NOBODY CAN HEAR.
EXCEPT MAYBE ONE GUY...

...ONE GUY WHO MIGHT HAVE COME AFTER HER. ONE GUY WITH THE BEST EARS IN THE WHOLE WORLD.
AND MICKEY IS RIGHT.
MATT HAS TRAILED LARKS TO THIS PLACE.
HE SCANS, STRAINING, UNTIL...
...HE HEARS SOMETHING FAINT. BIRD-LIKE...
...IS THAT SINGING?
YES.
STRONGER NOW.
AND OTHER VOICES. ALL KIDS.
A CHORUS.
DOZENS OF CHILDREN--NOW HUNDREDS!
WHAT HAS MATT STUMBLED ONTO?
WHAT'S GOTTEN INTO THEM?
THIS IS GETTING PRETTY WEIRD.
JUST BUILDING THEIR COURAGE. THEY'LL NEED IT.

NICE TOUCH, JULIO. THE SINGING, I MEAN.
UM... YEAH. RIGHT. CAME UP WITH THE IDEA MYSELF. THOUGHT YOU'D LIKE IT.
OUTSIDE
POWER CRACKLES BENEATH MATT'S FEET.
WAVES LICK ROTTING PILINGS.
THE HEART OF THE CITY ROARS, DISTANT, BEHIND HIM.
BUT MATT IS QUIET...
...QUIETER THAN THE MURMURED BRAGGING OF THE TWO MEN IN HIS WAY...
SO I TOLD HER. I TOLD HER GOOD.
...QUIETER, EVEN THAN THEIR HEARTBEATS.
SOMETIMES YOU JUST GOT TO LAY DOWN THE LAW, YOU KNOW?

YEAH. I KNOW.
GLAKK
HNH?
KRAKK
GEHHHH

A LAZY GROUP, THESE GUARDS. UNFOCUSED. NOT USED TO TROUBLE.
THEY YAWN AND CHAT.
ONE OF THEM EVEN LISTENS TO MUSIC.
NO MUSIC, STICK ALWAYS SAID. NOT WHEN YOU'RE DOING ANYTHING ELSE.
LISTEN TO MUSIC AND THERE'S NO TELLING WHAT YOU'LL MISS.
POP
KUNK!

A FEW WIRES YANKED--
--AND THERE WILL BE NO ESCAPE FOR ANY OF THEM. NOT BY CAR, ANYWAY.
TWO MORE, ON THE DOCK.
ALL THE REST ARE INSIDE.
MAKE NO SOUND.
CONCENTRATE.
TO BE CONCLUDED...

NEXT ISSUE

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